Minke whale

The Minke whale, or Common minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), is one of the largest marine mammal populations in the ecosystems of the eastern North Atlantic and one of the largest species of cetacean that can be commonly found in the North Sea (Olsen & Holst, 2023). In the 19th century, Minke whales in Norwegian waters were described as herring predators and ichthyophagous, meaning fish eaters (Olsen & Holst, 2023). Later studies revealed that North Atlantic Minke whales are relatively diverse in their diet and that they can migrate over long distances to find food (Olsen & Holst, 2023).

History/ Population trends

In the last century Norwegian whalers caught many minke whales in the North Sea, and in the 1940s there was a regular fishery along the Scottish and English coasts (Horwood, 1990). The Scottish fishery took place in at the end of summer to the east of the Shetland Islands and changed to off the English coast in early autumn (Horwood, 1990). The larger Scottish fishery took predominantly males, while the English fishery took mainly full-grown females (Horwood, 1990). The distribution of catches followed that of the fishery for migratory herring, because Minke whales were frequently observed among the herring shoals (Horwood, 1990). Fishing for Minke whales is now illegal throughout the entire North Sea (Horwood, 1990; Olsten & Holst, 2023). Nowadays Minke whales are frequently stranded on the British coasts and can be found throughout the year, but are mainly found in the North Sea during the summer (Horwood, 1990). There were signs of Norwegian whaling from the Skagerrak, but this was very limited (Horwood, 1990) In the Skagerrak, Kattegat, and further into the Baltic Sea, minke whales are an uncommon sight (Horwood, 1990).

Miscellaneous

- The Family which the Minke whale are part of, the *Balaenopteridae*, is the only Family of cetaceans that are still actively hunted around the world (Horwood, 1990; Ole Øen, 2021). However, the Minke whale itself is not a preferred target of many whalers as it is one of the smallest species within the Family (Horwood, 1990; Ole Øen, 2021).

Diet

- Sandeel (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Mackerel (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Herring (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Whiting (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Small fish (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Crustaceans (Olsen & Holst, 2023)
- Zooplankton (Olsen & Holst, 2023)

Sources

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